

not one now, or that by some very odd coincidence all intelligent men who have died since 1850 have been replaced by others, except one. It seems strange, in the world of today, to be so hard put to it to find themes for lamentation. 'My great ambition', writes Horace Wai-pole, in anticipation of old age, 'is not to grow cross.' It is not a very ambitious ambition; but I know few as sensible, especially for critics.

But even worse than the peevish gloom of this kind of criticism, is its religious grimness. Literature, which one fondly imagined to be a kind of pleasure, turns out to be a sort of mortification of the spirit. The great words of praise are 'serious' and 'impersonal'; 'the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'. The artists and writers I have known have been persons whose personality was anything but extinct. However, perhaps they were false brethren, wolves in sheep's clothing. But surely, in fact, there are artists of all sorts and conditions, from Byron to Jane Austen; why should they all be as alike as so many peas? And as for the appreciation of their work, I would rather a man approached it as a plum-pudding than as a sacrament. Far better follow that excellent motto of one of Herrick's poems: 'To live merrily, and to trust to Good Verses.' But your critical Savonarolas will have no Abbays of Thelema; they write of the joys of

literature  
like poor Maupertuis who 'ecrivait sur le  
bonheur d'une  
maniere a faire pleurer'. Indeed Mr. Eliot  
speaks in a  
curious sentence of 'the dreary cemetery' of  
literature.

That he should find it so is not surprising;  
but that he  
should admit it even to himself, seems  
remarkable. Or

was it just badinage? I can hardly think so.  
Sometimes

I have wondered whether such critics really  
hate all  
literature unconsciously, with a Platonic  
and Puritanic